

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This is a complete and current listing of the claims, marked with status identifiers in parentheses. The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended) An auto focus system, comprising:

an auto focus device which acquires a focus evaluation value indicating a degree of sharpness of an object image in a predetermined focus area set up within a viewing area according to a picture signal obtained from a camera, controls a focus of a taking lens so that the focus evaluation value indicates a best focus, and automatically focuses on a major object in the focus area;

a filter device which extracts a signal of a high-frequency component from the picture signal;

a major object position determination device which determines a position on the viewing area of the major object focused by the auto focus device by obtaining from the filter device signals of the high-frequency components corresponding to a first image picked up by the camera and a second image picked up by the camera after passage of a predetermined time from picking up the first image ~~according to the signal of the high-frequency component extracted by the filter device;~~ and

a modification device which modifies at least one of a range of the focus area and the viewing area of the camera so that the focus area includes the position of the major object determined by the major object position determination device.

2. (Currently Amended) The auto focus system as defined in claim 1, wherein the major object position determination device ~~obtains by the filter device the signals of the high frequency~~

~~components corresponding to a first image picked up by the camera and a second image picked up by the camera after passage of a predetermined time from picking up of the first image, and~~
compares the signal of the high-frequency component of the second image to the signal of the high-frequency component of the first image so as to acquire a shift amount of the position of the major object in the second image against the position of the major object in the first image.

3. (Original) The auto focus system as defined in claim 2, wherein the modification device displaces the at least one of the range of the focus area and the viewing area of the camera by the shift amount acquired by the major object position determination device.

4. (New) An autofocus system, comprising:

an autofocus device configured to control the focus of a lens to automatically focus on a major object in a focus area within a viewing area of a camera;

a major object position determination device configured to determine the position of the major object based on first and second images, the second image being taken at a later time than the first image; and

a modification device configured to adjust the focus area to include the position of the major object determined by the major object position determination device.

5. (New) The autofocus system of claim 4, wherein the autofocus device is configured to control the focus of the lens by using a focus evaluation value.

6. (New) The autofocus system of claim 5, wherein the focus evaluation value corresponds with a degree of sharpness of the focus area within the viewing area of the camera.

7. (New) The autofocus system of claim 4, further comprising:
a filter device configured to extract first and second high-frequency component signals from first and second picture signals of the first and second images, respectively.
8. (New) The autofocus device of claim 7, wherein the major object position determination device is configured to determine the position of the major object based on first and second images by comparing the first and second high-frequency component signals to acquire a major object position shift amount.
9. (New) The autofocus device of claim 8, wherein the modification device is configured to adjust the focus area to include the position of the major object determined by the major object position determination device by displacing at least one of a range of the focus area and the viewing area of the camera by the major object position shift amount.
10. (New) The autofocus system of claim 4, wherein the modification device is configured to adjust the focus area to include the position of the major object determined by the major object position determination device by modifying at least one of a range of the focus area and the viewing area of the camera.
11. (New) An autofocus method, comprising:
controlling the focus of a lens to automatically focus on a major object in a focus area within a viewing area of a camera;

determining the position of the major object based on first and second images, the second image being taken at a later time than the first image; and

adjusting the focus area to include the position of the major object.

12. (New) The autofocus method of claim 11, wherein controlling the focus of the lens includes using a focus evaluation value indicating a degree of sharpness of the focus area within the viewing area.

13. (New) The autofocus method of claim 11, further comprising:
extracting first and second high-frequency component signals from first and second picture signals of first and second images, respectively; and
comparing the first and second high-frequency component signals to acquire a major object position shift amount.

14. (New) The autofocus method of claim 13, wherein adjusting the focus area to include the position of the major object determined by the major object positioning device includes displacing at least one of a range of the focus area and the viewing area of the camera by the major object position shift amount.

15. (New) The autofocus method of claim 11, wherein adjusting the focus area to include the position of the major object includes modifying at least one of a range of the focus area and the viewing area of the camera.